

By THE SAME AUTHOR.

The Gandhian Way, 3rd Edition.

Non-Violent Revolution

The Latest Fad-Basic Education, 2nd Edition.

Politics of Charkha

ACHARYA J. B. KRIPALANI

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Note

This pamphlet incorporates the series of articles that recently appeared in the press with slight additions. They were written not to raise political controversy but to stimulate thought and study. In them I tried to analyse the basic position of the Congress as a national organisation for the freedom fight. If a slight criticism, of certain groups inside and outside the Congress has crept in, it was not intended but was perhaps inevitable. It has by contrast brought out the real nature of the Congress. It must therefore be taken in that light. Controversy is not my purpose but I shall be thankful to friends who point out to me publicly or privately the errors in my study, which lays no claim to be exhaustive or learned.

SWARAJ BHAVAN
ALLAHABAD
6-4-46

J. B. KRIPALANI

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I

A NATIONAL ORGANISATION

What is the Indian National Congress? It is a national organisation designed to achieve national freedom from foreign imperial yoke. In a former age this national freedom could be achieved without raising the question of democracy. It could be achieved by a native king or dynasty. In the 15th century parts of France were under the domination of England, that is, under the rule of the king of England. For Joan of Arc and those Frenchmen who supported her, it was enough to restore these parts of France to the sovereignty of the French king. It was not necessary for the purpose of national freedom to introduce in France a democratic form of government. The Dutch fought for their national independence and threw off the foreign yoke of Spain, under their rulers and princes. The sovereignty of the free Dutch people remained with their rulers and princes. In India Rana Pratap fought a hopeless fight against Akbar. He was fighting for the independence of his people against what was considered in those days a foreign rule, however benevolent.

This was in the past. To-day the restoration of an indigenous king or dynasty will not be enough for a national struggle. Neither would it be enough that a section of the people or a particular community in the nation should wield authority. For instance, the restoration of Pathan, Mogul, Maratha or Sikh rule, or for the matter of that, of Hindu or Muslim rule in India, will not fulfil the needs of the national struggle in the democratic

context of to-day. Apart from this, the birth and evolution of Congress as the spear-head of the national struggle against foreign rule has been democratic. Its constitution is democratic. It seeks to bring in every adult Indian into its fold, to whatever class, caste or creed he or she may belong. Its doors are open to all those who will and strive for the independence of India. Independence, therefore, when achieved, will be national and democratic in character. The old type of national independence under a king or dynasty, a religious community or territorial oligarchy, will not be national independence, as required by the modern age and its political ideals and as conceived by the Congress.

Content of Independence

If in former times national independence had no democratic implications and could exist under kings or oligarchies, it had also no economic implications. The Americans fought and achieved their independence as against England. It would have shocked the great patriots who took a leading part in this great revolution to be told that after independence was achieved society would be organised on equalitarian basis. They could think only in terms of a political democracy in which inequality of property was a recognised fact and where wealth was a guarantee of goodness and wisdom. The Founding Fathers of American independence could not have imagined that a person without property could be a full citizen in a democracy and be entrusted, even by popular vote, with the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the nation. In those days political liberty was quite consistent with very great economic inequality. Even to-day in England, in spite of the Labour Govern-

ment, in America, France and many other countries of Europe, democracy is consistent with landlordism and capitalism. Nay, it is consistent even with imperialism. Does Congress stand and work for such a political democracy? It did once. Whether the so-called moderates or extremists, whether the followers of Gokhale and Pherozshah Mehta or those of Tilak and Aravindo, all consciously or unconsciously conceived of and worked for a zamindar and capitalist ridden democracy, where what is called the middle or the bourgeois class would wield power. The people, of course, will have the vote and will be free from economic starvation. The rulers of the people would be the wise, the good and the rich. The rich were naturally considered as the good and the wise so far at least as political power was concerned.

The Gospel of Social Justice

After Gandhiji's advent in Indian politics and his entry in the Congress and his leadership thereof, the conception of national independence has slowly broadened to include some sort of economic justice and equality. Those who are familiar with Gandhiji's earliest writings, especially his book, *Hind Swaraj*, will find the germs of not only democratic but also economic swaraj. Gandhiji's ideas in the economic field were supported, in a way, by socialism and communism as conceived in the West. For Gandhiji swaraj has always meant the freedom of the masses from want and ignorance. It has also meant a limitation of inordinate wealth. Gandhiji, therefore, from the beginning has emphasised the economic aspect of swaraj and advocated swadeshi which he has further developed into the doctrine of decentralised industry, as symbolised by charkha, khadi and village industry. In the beginning, all this was vaguely conceived. Gandhiji seems to have

been feeling his way. His ideas at first, at least in his writings, were not quite precise or definite.

The economic content of swaraj was definitely formulated at the Karachi Congress in 1931. The initiative was taken by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. What he proposed in his resolution of "Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme" had the powerful backing of Gandhiji. But for that backing the resolution had little chance of being accepted by the Congress leadership at that early period. Since then the western ideas of socialism and communism have been gaining ground among a section of congressmen. Those in the beginning recognised Jawaharlalji as their natural leader and spokesman. Western socialism and communism are wedded to big centralised industry. They are also wedded to the capture of power by a violent revolution. Till the capture of power is achieved, their main pre-occupation is the dissemination of ideas about socialism and the training of the people by means of Kisan agitation, industrial strikes and periodical conflicts with authority in which non-violence and violence are mixed together. The socialists also believe that the spread of their ideology will give direction even to the national struggle for independence. The socialists and the communists (in the beginning they were, in India, indistinguishable) do not believe in non-violence except as a temporary expedient imposed upon India by circumstances and to be rejected whenever and wherever circumstances make violence possible and practical. However, leaving aside the question of violence and non-violence and confining ourselves purely to the economic field, the Congress to-day stands for some sort of economic levelling up and down. It is not committed to any form of socialism. It is essentially a national organisation for

the achievement of national freedom in the present political and economic context of the world.

International Co-operation

If Indian freedom as conceived by the Congress is democratic in character and implies social and economic justice, it has also certain international implications, which are peculiarly its own. These implications arise from the means that under Gandhiji's lead the Congress had adopted and is pledged to adopt for the achievement of its goal of national independence. In History, nations that achieved their freedom, whenever and wherever possible, have inevitably aimed at foreign expansion and conquest. Nationalism triumphant has generally turned jingoist and imperialist. This was the case with liberated Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, Germany and America. After World War I when by the mere accident of the international re-settlement of the European map, Poland was made free, it indulged unabashed in talk of colonial possessions for itself. Even such countries that by revolution displaced kings and oligarchies and established democratic rule, sought for expansion. Democratic England has always been imperial. The French revolution inspired by ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity established republican rule in France. But this did not in any way affect French ambitions on the continent or French colonial expansion. The Russian revolution inspired by Marxism was in the interest of the world proletariat. But this fact does not seem to stand in the way of Russia's expansion. The Czarist policy of nibbling at neighbours and slowly swallowing them does not appear to have stopped. This frightens rival imperial powers and weaker neighbours as much as did the Czarist imperialism. The polar-bear, after a while, is again spreading

out its paws and claws. The expansion of liberated nations, liberated through whatever ideologies, presents a strange paradox in human history. Why the conquered, when free, should seek to conquer, why nations, that have groaned under tyranny and oppression for centuries, when they have achieved their liberty, should seek to impose humiliation and slavery on their weaker neighbours, is a phenomenon which has not been adequately and scientifically investigated and accounted for by historians. If we may, we would venture to suggest that this curious habit of the conquered to conquer in their own turn, of the slaves when free to seek to enslave others, of the humiliated and the oppressed to try to humiliate and oppress others, may be due to the means and methods that, throughout history, have been employed for achieving national liberation. Freedom from foreign yoke has invariably been achieved by war, violence and crooked diplomacy. These create their own momentum and produce their own national karma. This momentum, this karma, has to be worked out. It works itself out in foreign expansion. War and violence are dynamic. The quality of the force generated must find its appropriate field of activity. War and violence can merely destroy. They cannot create. For creation peaceful and co-operative effort is necessary. So far as war and violence destroy worn-out and effete forms and institutions, they serve a useful negative purpose of clearing the ground for new and useful structures. But the task of destruction is performed through means that generate anger, hate, fanaticism, and lust for power. These passions once roused must work themselves out. They cannot at a moment's notice be transmuted into peaceful and creative activity. Much of the energy generated has therefore the tendency to spend itself in foreign aggression, conquest and

expansion. The means employed put their own stamp upon the ends achieved.

Whether the above explanation adequately explains the aggressive tendency of liberated countries or not, it is a fact that the Indian National Congress under Gandhiji's lead has accepted peaceful and legitimate means for the achievement of its swaraj. If India is able to achieve its goal through non-violent means, the presumption is that it will, when free, throw its weight on the side of disarmament, international co-operation and world peace. By its non-violent struggle it will create a stock of karma for peace and good-will. This will save it from the usual aggression that has characterised the rise of free nations in history. Indian swaraj as conceived by the Congress under Gandhiji will be internationally non-violent, peaceful and co-operative. That is implied by the means the Congress has kept before itself for the achievement of its goal and the attitude of its leadership in international affairs. Gandhiji stands for out and out non-violence. Jawaharlalji, though not a believer in non-violence in the sense in which Gandhiji conceives it, always thinks of Indian Swaraj in terms of international peace and co-operation. He always says that India conceives its independence against the background of world problems of peace and disarmament. It is this attitude of his which accounts for whatever hesitation he displayed in his attitude towards England during the last war. He does not approach the question of world peace from Gandhiji's spiritual standpoint. He views it as a politician, as a democrat, as a radical and a humanitarian. He also calls himself a socialist. He does not belong to any particular school of socialism. This is because, in spite of his vehement talk, somewhere in his make-up he

has a partiality for non-violence and a natural disinclination for cunning and crooked diplomacy. He may excuse and even admire violence and diplomacy when used for a good cause but he may find it difficult to practise these doubtful virtues himself. The ideology and effective leadership of the Congress thus gives to Indian independence movement its peculiar and unusual international outlook that would avoid aggression and imperialism and work for international peace and co-operation.

Congress and Communism

Can the Congress be a communist or socialist organisation? Evidently it cannot be unless its very texture and basis are changed. As we have indicated before, the primary object of the congress is national liberation from foreign domination. This national liberation is conceived in modern terms of political democracy and economic justice. In its struggle for national freedom the Congress has always sought to mobilise all classes and communities in the nation. Why? Because national slavery is the common handicap from which all classes and communities suffer. An Indian as an Indian is inferior, whether he be a prince or a beggar, a capitalist or a labourer, a zamindar or a kisan, Hindu or Muslim, Sikh or Christian, Parsee or Jew. By virtue of his being an Indian he is inferior to a member of the ruling race. This may not be so clear in everyday life. But it comes out plainly at times of stress and struggle. Those who administered the martial law regime in the Punjab in 1919 made no difference between the rich and the poor, the Hindus or the Muslims. The whole population, except those who were carrying out the orders of the foreigner, were equally humiliated and terrorised. In

1942 and after, the British tommies made no difference between Indian and Indian. To them the Hindu or the Muslim, the rich or the poor were the same. Even Rai Bahadurs and Khan Bahadurs were merely Indians. All alike were humiliated. There are instances where Muslims tried to impress upon the tommies that they belonged to the Muslim League but the tommies merely stared without comprehension and went on with their nefarious work of heaping indignities without caring for the labels that different Indians bore. In many instances when high Indian officials refused to use terrorist methods to suppress the people, they were pushed aside by their English subordinates who carried on the work of repression. For the latter it was a patriotic duty of saving the British empire in its hour of peril. The British must, in the last resort, rely only upon their own countrymen to keep their rule in India. Therefore, whatever be the caste, class or community of an Indian, as an Indian he wants to escape the humiliation that is incidental to national slavery. Indigenous rule may at times be unjust and tyrannical but it does not put down sections of the population because they belong to what is considered an inferior race or nation. The one-ness of Indians, as distinguished from the foreigners, may be based upon a mere sentiment but that makes no difference. As yet the world over the sentiment of nationality is very real and moves masses of people very powerfully. Under its impulse people forget their internal differences, social, economic and religious, and fight the foreigner as one man. In the last war even the Russians were more powerfully moved by the idea of nationality than that of saving the particular brand of their socialism. Every movement for national independence, as every war, has sought to organise and mobilise this sentiment of a

common nationality. In the case of a subject people, however, the idea of nationality is no mere sentiment. It is based upon hard social, political and economic facts.

National Struggle and Unity

How does this national sentiment work? It works so as to make people forget, at least in times of danger, their internal differences. The people at such times act as one consolidated party or group. A national revolution against foreign rule is like an international war. In international war nations act as consolidated groups. In a war for national liberation, two nations are involved. The dominant nation is organised in a government. The slave nation is not so organised. In a crisis a free nation that is organised in a government evokes unity not merely by appeals to common patriotic sentiments but, if need be, it coerces recalcitrant elements into practical unity through the power of the state. The nation that struggles for independence has no such coercive state machinery. It has to rely upon the sentiment of patriotism and public opinion for achieving enough practical unity to see it through the struggle.

National movements in history have rarely succeeded with one stroke. Usually they go on for years and even decades. There are periodical conflicts involving revolutionary action. These conflicts are of the nature of war. They cannot therefore be of long duration. They must either succeed or fail in a short time. Every revolutionary conflict, except the last, fails to achieve the goal. Each conflict paves the way for the final and triumphant conflict that will dislodge foreign rule. The unsuccessful conflicts are a training for the final blow. They

A National Organisation

strengthen the nation and when well guided they do it effectively. In between these revolutionary national struggles, there are periods of comparative quiet. The fight has not ceased. It is only an armed unstable peace. The interval is utilised by the two parties, if they are wise and vigilant, to sharpen their instruments and perfect their organisation for the next conflict. If for success in international war internal conflicts must for the time being cease and the nation act as one, then such conflicts must be kept at the lowest level even during the period of preparation. This (preparation) too needs united effort and activity. But it is difficult for a nation, that has lost the habit of co-operative political action, owing to foreign domination, to keep its internal quarrels in abeyance for long. Moreover there is the foreign master to foment differences by the clever playing of mutual fear, jealousy and hate, real or imaginary, and by the cunning manipulation of his vast power and interest that the master is obliged to allow must go to some native or the other, some community or the other. As long as benefits do not accrue to him he is indifferent where they go in a slave population. He therefore does not hesitate so to manipulate his patronage as to keep native interests and communities at loggerheads. In comparatively peaceful times the nation has to be on its guard against this distribution of patronage. It must teach the people not to compete for the favours that can be had only as gifts from the foreigner. It must also teach people to compete in service for the nation and not for the loaves and fishes of office or for any other advantage. It must emphasise and uphold service-politics and not the ordinary party or power politics.

II

REVOLUTIONARY ACTION ON ONE FRONT

The national movement must always be anxious to remove internal and sectional causes of friction and conflict. The constant effort must be to remove glaring iniquities and injustices. But all this must be so done as not to disturb the unity needed for the fight against the foreigner. The national movement must ever be anxious to eliminate internal conflicts and achieve unity of purpose but in the process it must be careful to see that no new conflicts, that are likely to sabotage national unity and the will to independence, are created. A national movement has therefore to strike a middle path. In removing internal injustices, whatever its theoretical beliefs and predilections, it must content itself with reformatory activity. It can afford revolutionary action only on one front and that the national front. In all internal matters it must use the common national sentiment to smoothen differences, at least for the duration when the enemy is on the native soil. All revolutionary internal conflict, based upon locality, community or class, even when reasonable, must for the time being be handled carefully and cautiously. In ideas the leadership may be revolutionary even in internal matters. But in action it must be non-revolutionary. If the expression of thought creates internal trouble, expression must also be modulated.

Yet there may be grievous wrongs done to sections of the population that need immediate action, if the national movement is not to suffer. Even here every effort should be made to square up differences without resort to direct action. The conflicting interests must be made to realise that the continuance of foreign rule is a hindrance that must first be removed even for internal adjustments. They must be told that the foreigner, instead of smoothening matters, will always foment trouble. For instance, in India untouchability is the most glaring, the most painful and the most inhuman internal iniquity. If the Harijans want radical action for its solution, here and now, they will be theoretically justified. But practically they will only play into the hands of the foreigner. They will not only injure the national cause but also their own cause. They may also not approach the foreign government for help. The foreign government in whatever it does will only keep the separation alive. The caste Hindus must also be made to realise the harm that they are doing not only to the nation but even to themselves by hugging untouchability. The reforming members of the dominant classes must put in the cause of reform the utmost zeal and sacrifice. Only thus can internal differences be so smoothed as not to create a fresh rift in the national movement.

What I have said about untouchability holds equally true about the solution of the communal problem. While every effort should be made to eliminate the causes of the trouble no extreme measures should be advocated or taken. Extreme measures by any party, under the situation, are even impossible. All effective power is in the hands of the third party and it will use that power only

in its own interests. If the untouchables were prepared to use extreme measures, the government will support or oppose their cause as the government's own interests required. The government will use internal trouble only to take advantage of it for themselves. If the Hindus and Muslims wanted to settle their quarrels by resort to civil war they will not be allowed to do so unless it was to the interest of the British. The interest of the British will not be served by a free fight to the finish where both parties are unhampered. It is very well served by keeping the fight at the stage of rioting. When a communal riot exceeds a particular limit, the foreign government intervenes and suppresses whatever party appears to it to be more dangerous from its own view-point, whatever be the justice of the case. Foreign domination does not admit even of a civil war between communities. A civil war is a great tragedy. But it has its prophylactic quality. After it is over people generally regain sanity and get united, as they did in many European countries and in America. Foreign rule keeps the cancer of division in an eternally festering condition.

Economic class conflicts work in the same way as sectional and communal conflicts. Therefore while every effort should be made to remove economic injustice and exploitation, no extreme measures of the nature of revolutionary strikes or class war should be undertaken, advocated or encouraged. Any war to the finish between economic classes, as between communities, can be possible when the scales are not weighed in favour of one party or the other as suits the foreigner. If however conflict is kept up, not only will national interests suffer but also the particular economic interests that are sought to be protected by extreme measures. A national libera-

tion movement therefore cannot afford the luxury of an extreme economic programme of socialism or communism. These programmes in their extreme and logical form will have to await the advent of national independence.

First Things First

Again it must be realised that socialism can be established only by those who have absolute political power. It cannot be established without it. Lenin and Stalin could not have worked their programmes of five and ten years plans without absolute political power. Bereft of this power socialism and communism can merely preach an ideology which cannot be put in practice today and must await national independence. Too much talk of socialism and its obtrusion in Indian politics would create divisions that would be harmful to the cause of national independence without which socialism of any sort cannot be established. Of course by indulging in talk of socialism one may look modern, scientific and up-to-date. But in practical politics this gives to the nation no advantage as against the foreign enemy. It puts the cart before the horse. It fails to put first things first. The essence of all morality as also of political wisdom is to put first things first.

There was a time when Jawaharlal could not deliver a public speech without bringing in socialism. He conducted, as it were, classes on the subject and people of advanced age went to his meetings ready with notebooks and pencils to take notes on socialism. However, the realities of the situation changed him. He now rarely talks of socialism. He has therefore lost caste with the repositories of Indian socialism. He perhaps feels that the Congress has swallowed and digested as much of the socialist programme as a national organisation, whose first

business is to free the country from foreign domination, can swallow and digest. All his emphasis now is on "Quit India". There was a time, not long ago, specially in U.P., when kisan audiences were treated to the whole philosophy of Marx, translated into doubtful Hindi, which the poor kisans could hardly understand. I remember one such meeting in U.P. in which Jawaharlal, with all his love for socialism, was constrained to tell the speakers that he had listened to their discourses for more than a couple of hours wondering to whom they were talking. The audience understood not a word of the learned discourses. In those days because of the constant harping on the kisan-zamindar problem British imperialism had receded to the background.

Shortly after, came the Congress ministries that enjoyed some real though limited power in provincial matters and soon by legislation they eased the situation as between the kisan and zamindar. The labour situation too was eased by legislation in congress-controlled provinces. All this was possible with strictly limited powers. With freedom the popular government would have absolute authority. If at that time the nation decrees a socialist regime it can bring it about with comparatively less difficulty. But to-day talk and preach socialism, however much we may, the hindrances of foreign rule will not allow us to take any practical steps for its realisation. We will only be sacrificing an immediate certain advantage for a future doubtful advantage.

All, therefore, that we can do now is to broad-base our democracy so that it includes in its objectives economic and social justice. The economic policies advocated by a national organisation fighting the foreigner can be

socialistic but not socialism of any variety. Congress has done this by formulating its economic programme at Karachi. It has said that the key industries in a free India will be nationalised. But it would be wrong and impolitic for it to say, at this stage, that free market or private property will altogether be abolished in an independent India, and a centralised dictatorship or bureaucracy established to regulate not only political but also the economic life of the nation. Even if Congress had a partiality for out-and-out socialism, it would be foolish to talk of it till independence is achieved.

Moreover, socialism is not a universally accepted creed. Many scientific thinkers believe that there is some virtue in a free market and some kind of regulated competition. They point out to the past and say that what monopoly capitalism has done is to smother the free market. These are to be saved from the clutches of monopoly capitalism. If Congress made socialism as its goal it would to-day plunge the country in a fruitless, nay, harmful controversy about the variety of socialism to be established. That there are more than half a dozen varieties of socialism cannot be denied. The only country that is considered to have established socialism is Russia and many schools of socialism not only deny that Russia has established socialism but charge Russia with having sabotaged it on the altar of dictatorship, nationalism, militarism and power politics. Bernard Shaw describes the Russian regime as national socialism. In democratic countries all that has been attempted is economic reform and social security; and this is done by legislation. Such legislation is socialistic inasmuch as it works for greater social justice but it does not establish what is

known as socialism, even if the meaning of the term were as clear as it was supposed to be a couple of decades back.

Congress not a Class Organisation

Again, the origin and the evolution of the Congress precludes it from being a purely class organisation. Socialism is based upon class antagonism, if not class hatred and class war. A national organisation is fundamentally based upon class collaboration. The Congress will have to change its aims, objects and methods, before it can be a class organisation. It has always consisted of people of all classes, religions and communities. As we have said before, the doors of the Congress are open to all Indians, native and domiciled, irrespective of class, caste or religion. An organisation working for the establishment of socialism will have to close its doors to all those who do not believe in class conflict and class war. It cannot include as its members zamindars, capitalists and what are generally called the bourgeois classes. All these must first "de-class" themselves or at least declare themselves as "de-classed" before they can be admitted. (What this word "de-class" means is difficult to understand). In the present context an organisation for the establishment of socialism can only be a sectional organisation, in the sense that it cannot open its doors to all classes of the Indian population. It will have to be narrower than the Congress. Can the Congress, considering its origin, history, evolution and traditions, so narrow itself as not to embrace the whole adult population of India? If by some revolution it could do so, it will remain Indian National Congress only in name. In substance and reality it will be something else and new. It will have completely broken with its past and its traditions and its modes of thought and behaviour.

It is true that the Congress has changed its form and shape often enough. It changed them after the leadership of Gandhiji. But the changes brought about under his leadership were comparatively conservative and in keeping with its natural evolution and its traditions. Even the non-violence of Gandhiji was in keeping with the traditions of the Congress. From constitutional agitation, which is necessarily non-violent, to non-violent direct action was not a sudden revolution but an evolutionary revolution that did not change the nature of the Congress as a national organisation. But supposing Gandhiji had changed the Congress to a violent and military organisation, such a change would have been too revolutionary for the very safety and existence of the Congress as an open mass organisation. It would not have been in keeping with its origin, history, tradition and direction of growth. In the language of religion this would not have been its Swadharma, but Paradharma, in which it would have perished. It would have again come to life, if it can be called coming to life, only in isolated, secret and terrorist societies. That would not have been the Congress.

Congress Doors Open to All

We have talked of classes. Let us now think in terms of religion. The Congress membership is open to people professing any religion or no religion. When it accepts socialism and not national freedom as its immediate goal, will its doors be open to men of all faiths or only those who believe in materialism? (The word is used in its philosophic sense). In 1934 when the Socialist Party was being organised at Patna, I was asked to become its delegate by one of its chief organisers. I was known to be inclined to socialism. Being almost a beggar I had no sympathy for the zamindar or the capitalist whose iniqui-

tous wealth I have denounced rather vehemently. This organiser of the conference asked me to join it and even to lead it. (He was a young man then and I belonged to the group of older politicians). I asked him, "Can a man believing in religion and its values be a socialist?" Quick came the reply, "Socialism is a material creed. A man believing in religion cannot be a scientific socialist. What the Conference stands for is scientific socialism and not utopian socialism." I said, "Supposing a man's religion was a personal one, a matter between him and his God, even then he could not be a socialist?" He said, "No, he cannot be." Thereupon I told him I was sorry for I yet believed in an unseen power and a future existence and I could not induce myself to renounce religion though I subscribed to no particular creed. I also told him that I thought socialism was an economic doctrine and not a creed, material or any other. He merely shook his head and abandoned me to the mercy of the God of my imagination. I suppose he thought that there was no salvation for me here, and as for hereafter he did not bother about it, as he did not believe in it, on very conclusive and scientific grounds.

I don't know whether the ideas of this young enthusiast about religion and scientific socialism have changed with advancing experience and education, or he stands where he stood twelve years back. I however know that communist Russia to-day not only tolerates religion but helps it as one of the institutions recognised by the state. I also know that nowadays socialists do not denounce religion as the 'opiate of the people' which they did a decade before. However, it would be interesting to know if an avowed man of religion would be allowed in an organisation whose aim was not merely the establishment

of a free India but a socialist India. If Congress were to change itself into an organisation for the establishment of socialism, that is scientific socialism, (there can be no other variety of it), will its doors be open to members of all the various religions that are professed in India? (I say professed because generally practice is irrelevant to religion!) Will its doors be open even to Jains and Buddhists who do not believe in God? These are interesting questions. But who will answer? Any way the Congress will not be the Congress as we have known it or as we know it, if it closes its door to any Indian because of his faith or want of it.

For all these reasons the Congress cannot be an organisation for the establishment of socialism, not at least till Purna Swaraj is attained. And afterwards the Congress as Congress, that is as an organisation that works and fights for Indian national independence ceases to exist. The old name may be appropriated by a reforming or reactionary or a neutral group but it will not be the Congress whose goal is complete independence of India or Purna Swaraj, for the simple reason that that has been achieved already.

III

RADICALS AND REACTIONARIES

It is contended that Socialist parties in the Congress have acted as what in modern parlance are called ginger-groups. They are the leftists and the radicals in the Congress. Do facts in India bear out these contentions of the interested? In India the call of direct action has always come from Gandhiji. The rest of the leadership, even as the general population, have helped and carried on the struggle started by him under the auspices of the Congress. To say this is not to minimise the importance of other leaders. What could Gandhiji have done without Das and Motilal and what can he do to-day without the top leaders in the Congress? It is well known that when Gandhiji has kept a plan of direct action before the country, he has always first discussed it with those who are his close associates by virtue of sharing his ideology, more or less. When they have given their consent others are consulted. The close associates of Gandhiji have ever been dubbed as conservatives, rightists and reactionaries. A few years ago Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was a reactionary. He has now been rehabilitated and given a corner among the elect. But how long his reputation as a revolutionary will last none can say, for there are again audible whispers that he has a fascist mentality. (Is it because he is carrying out the Parliamentary programme effectively?). Jawaharlalji, once the pet of ginger-groups, has fallen from grace. Shri Subash Chandra Bose at the time of his second presidential election, was a radical but he was soon abandoned.

Gandhiji's political reputation has kept on changing. Sometimes he was considered a mere social reformer. In the days of individual civil disobedience in 1941 he was not considered revolutionary enough. With the "Quit India" resolution there were two contradictory estimates of him in the radical groups. The Communist element dubbed him as a friend of the Nazis and the Japanese. The Socialists of another variety and the Forward-blockists hailed him as the only revolutionary personality in the Congress hierarchy. When he has not approved some of the violent activities of 1942 there is again a division of opinion among the non-communist radical groups. Some yet believe that he is the most revolutionary personality in the Congress. Others have once more begun thinking of him as one whose utility, as a revolutionary, ended with the 1942 movement. They think that the future pattern of the revolution will be on those lines of 1942 which Gandhiji has disapproved. This section believes that the spearhead of the 1942 movement was that class in it which differs from Gandhiji in the technique to be used even in a non-violent struggle of direct action. If Gandhiji chooses to live up to 120 as he threatens to do, how often will his reputation with the so-called leftists change, one does not know. Is it not time that we knew Gandhiji better ?

On all evidence Gandhiji has been up to now the most revolutionary force in the Indian freedom movement. The so-called radical groups have not been able to compete with him in this. The reason is not far to seek. These groups are radical not because they are always radical in their attitude towards the independence movement but because they are socialist and marxist. This fact, apart from any attitude towards the independence move-

ment, constitutes their radicalism. In 1933 the new converts to marxism, which they had studied in jail, were in favour of abandoning the non-co-operation movement that was going on sluggishly then. Gandhiji was for its continuance in the changed form of individual civil disobedience. In 1940 with his individual civil disobedience Gandhiji was a moderate in the eyes of the Socialists and the Communists who advocated a mass struggle then. As soon as Russia entered the war there was a difference in the radical groups even about individual C.D. The Communists wanted its abandonment. The Socialist attitude remained the same, that is, of non-vocal opposition, not because it was not needed but because the situation, according to them, called for a mass movement. Both groups styled themselves as radical in contrast to the ordinary Congressman who was merely a congressman and had no other label. Again with the August 1942 resolution, there was a division of opinion in the radical groups. The Communists damned the 1942 struggle as going over to the enemy, as a betrayal of the progressive forces in the world. They propagated that the war was the 'People's War'; which people they never cared to specify. The Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc hailed the movement as something tremendous and revolutionary. To-day these groups applaud every thing that was done by the people without reservation. Gandhiji has to find fault with some things that were done in the heat of the moment by popular anger goaded on by acts of repression that would have shamed Nazism itself. Who are the radicals then? Where shall we search for them?

May we suggest that the word radical has no absolute or fixed connotation? A radical must be a radical in

some particular activity. A radical in matters social may be a reactionary in politics, and vice versa. In India we are familiar with this phenomenon. Many social reformers in India are reactionary in matters political. May we therefore suggest that a radical nationalist may be a poor socialist and a radical socialist may be but a poor nationalist? If the latter is a poor nationalist he may not give a very creditable account of himself in the freedom struggle. His course of action may be powerfully deflected from the national struggle to international questions. He may not properly limit his vision. His canvas may be too big for his artistic ability. This is what actually happened in the case of the Communist Party of India. If they had concentrated on the Indian independence movement they would have been as radical as other independence groups. Because they did not do so, they must be styled as reactionaries, so far as the movement of Indian independence is concerned and they are rightly so styled. They however consider their brand of socialism as more radical than the wishy-washy socialism of others. They believe they were helping socialist forces the world over and serving the revolution. The Communists in India ought to have known that they could not deflect the course of a war, in which powerful imperial nations were interested, in favour of the independence of India, Indo-China, Indonesia or the defeated countries. The People's War has been won and yet are the people of many lands in chains! The socialists in the Congress like other congressmen were good nationalists. May I suggest that they first and foremost thought in terms of the independence of India and not in terms of socialism? May be that they believed socialism could be saved that way only. But the Communists also believed that socialism could only be saved by not thinking in terms of the national

struggle or independence just then. That would come once Russia was triumphant.

To sum up, I would say that the socialists in the Congress in 1942 and after were thinking in terms of national independence rather than in terms of socialism. They were therefore along with Gandhiji and other Congressmen radicals so far as the struggle for national independence went and the communists may have been radicals in regard to socialism, but they were reactionaries so far as the independence movement went. There can be a comparison of better and worse in things of the same sort and not things radically different. The excellence of one class may not be the excellence of another class. There can be no comparison, as Socrates would say, between the excellence of a horse and that of a donkey. A race-horse will be a poor donkey, in political term, a non-radical donkey. But he will be an excellent horse and in political language a radical horse. The best donkey will be radical as a donkey and not radical as a horse. The moral is that if there are to be radical groups in the Congress they must be radical in terms of the independence movement and not by virtue of their socialism or communism.

In the Congress in the past there have been radical groups. But they were radical in terms of freedom struggle. The Tilakites in the first two decades of the present century were radical Congressmen as compared with the moderates, inasmuch as they advocated radical policies for the independence movement. Again in 1919-20 Gandhiji and his followers were radical Congressmen as against the old leadership. Later, the Independence League group was more radical in terms of nationalism,

inasmuch as it advocated the political goal of India as Purna Swaraj outside the British Empire. Soon, however, Gandhiji and the old leadership stole their thunder and incorporated their ideas in orthodox Congress politics. Any individual or group is free to place before the Congress radical programmes and policies, provided they are conceived in terms of the national independence movement. When that struggle is ended in victory and the country has attained Purna Swaraj, new parties will naturally arise in the nation and the nation's parliament. Some of these parties may be wedded to socialism. But to-day to have effective socialist or communist parties would be to put the cart before the horse. As we have already said, socialism of any variety needs first independence and a socialist party to-day in India can be merely propagandist and the Congress cannot afford to be merely a propagandist organisation. Socialists when they begin to undertake field work will find that they can do that only in terms of national independence. If that is so, there will be little difference between their socialism and that of a broad-based Congress whose first and paramount concern is the good of the masses. If the difference is still kept up it will be one without distinction so far as immediate policies go.

Radicalism and Effective Action

The word radical, vague as it is, has yet another implication. An individual or a party may be radical in the enunciation of its goal but may not be quite so radical in the means advocated and employed for achievement of the goal. Such an individual or a party cannot be called radical. The Liberals, the Mahasabhaistes and the Muslim Leaguers in India, all stand for the independence of India. But as none of them are prepared to use appropriate and

effective means for the achievement of this revolutionary end, they cannot be called radicals. The Congress, even if it were to advocate mere Dominion Status but were prepared to take revolutionary action for its achievement, would be radical in spite of its more modest aim. In the 18th and 19th centuries some thinkers and philosophers advocated world co-operation and peace. They did not, by that fact, become radicals. They were merely radical thinkers. Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells advocate radical internal and international changes but as they are not prepared to use revolutionary means for the achievement of their radical ideas, they cannot be called radicals.

Very often, during the course of the national struggle, Gandhiji's demands from the foreign Government have been more modest than those of other leaders. Yet because Gandhiji is prepared to back his demands with non-co-operation he is more radical than those whose demands are more extreme. After the Punjab tragedy, Gandhiji's demands from the Government were more moderate than those of Das and Motilal. The latter demanded the trial and punishment of official criminals. Gandhiji merely wanted that their pensions be not paid from the Indian exchequer. Yet because Gandhiji was prepared to back up his demand with the sanction of Satyagraha he was more radical than Das and Motilal. Very often Gandhiji pitches his demands at the lowest but if these are not granted he is prepared to risk his all. He is, therefore, a radical and a revolutionary leader. In 1940 Gandhiji merely wanted freedom for the nation to express its thoughts about the character of the last war. He did not demand the withdrawal of the British. But as he backed up his demand with direct action, however limited, he was more radical than those others who wanted

a mass movement but were either unwilling or unable to use the sanction of non-co-operation. Often Gandhiji has been criticised for fixing his demands too low by the so-called radicals. But inasmuch as he is willing and able to back his non-radical demands with radical action, he must be considered more radical than his critics whose demands are high but who are either unable or unwilling to back them up with appropriate action. In 1920, when Gandhiji took up the leadership of the Congress, the radicals of the time were the underground revolutionaries. They believed in secret organisation and terrorist violence. Gandhiji believed in non-violence. But he was able to organise his non-violent action on a country-wide scale. Gandhiji's action, though it may have looked to superficial and unscientific observers as less radical than that of the violent revolutionaries, was in reality more radical and the country and the world recognised it as such.

It may also happen that radical action may be advocated by groups that lack mass support. A more moderate action may have mass support and may consequently become more effective. Inasmuch as it is more effective it must be considered radical. In India to-day there are leftist groups who advocate extreme measures to be adopted against foreign rule but they have not the necessary mass support to make the action they advocate effective. The Congress may not be very extreme in the measures it is prepared to support but because it has the necessary mass support, it can organise effective resistance. Under the circumstances, the Congress is more radical than more extreme but less effective groups. Mere advocacy of radical action does not make a party radical. If the will and the capacity for effective action is lacking,

radical policies may become moderate or even reactionary. It is not foam and thunder that count but appropriate action. The sporadic and unauthorised mob action which took place recently in several places in India cannot be called radical because it was neither thought out, planned or organised. It was, therefore, not effective in political terms. It may even prove in the long run to be reactionary. Inasmuch as Gandhiji organises resistance and has the greatest mass support for effective action he must be considered the most radical leader under the circumstances. And inasmuch as the Congress follows his lead in any mass action we may propose the Congress must remain the most radical and the most revolutionary organisation in India for the achievement of independence.

A Constitutional Dilemma

Let us now study the question of socialist parties from the constitutional view point. A group in an organisation must aspire to convert the whole organisation to its own way of thinking and acting. It must seek to convert its ineffective minority to an effective majority. It must make itself the effective mouthpiece and become the executive of the organisation, through its leaders. There can be no other philosophy behind a group. A socialist or communist group in the Congress would naturally have the ambition to convert the whole nation to its views and policies. But if any of these groups converted the whole Congress organisation to its views the Congress would cease to be a national organisation. It will be a class organisation, for socialism and communism are not national but class movements. The primary object of a class organisation is naturally to accentuate

and carry on the class struggle. If it makes that as its primary objective the national problem will have a subordinate place in its thought and effort. Apart from the advantages and disadvantages of such a transformation of a national organisation, the organisation, by whatever name called, will not be the same. The Indian National Congress will be the Indian Communist or Socialist Congress.

It is however believed that such a transformed Congress will fight the national and class struggle simultaneously. This sounds very brave but will not be practical politics, for the reason that the conditions required for a successful national freedom-struggle are not the same as those of a successful class struggle. The one wants national unity. The other works for division and extermination of certain classes. The one works for and needs class collaboration, the other accentuates and needs class differences and class conflict.

National struggles for freedom, as we have already said, are of the nature of international wars. A nation at war keeps its forces united by emphasising, for the time being, common interests, needs, sentiments and loyalty. Where these already exist to a certain degree, the effort is to strengthen them and ignore points of difference and conflict. There is internal co-operation between different interests, communities and classes, upon a minimum agreed common measure. This minimum must however be large enough to satisfy the unprivileged classes. It must also be moderate enough as not to frighten the privileged. Some such process must take place in the organisation of a national struggle.

Again, in international conflicts, each party seeks for allies. In the Indian context the foreign government would naturally search for allies among the zamindars, the capitalists and the middle class. Where will a communist or socialist congress seek for allies? It cannot seek them among the classes mentioned above. After the experience of nazism and fascism it cannot count even upon the loyalty of the lower middle-class. It can only seek allies from outside the land. Such a combination would complicate the issues. The resultant struggle will be an international war complicated with civil war. It will have the disadvantages of both, fought on the native soil. It will have none of the advantages of either. It will be madness without method. It will be confusion worse confounded.

IV

PARTIES WITHIN A PARTY

This brings us to the vexed question of parties in the Congress. Parties in an organisation are allowed to function when they accept the basic principles, policies and discipline of the organisation. Whenever there is any fundamental conflict between the organisation as a whole and a party in it, the members of the latter must give up either the organisation or leave the party. The first loyalty of every member in an organisation must be to the organisation and not to a party in it. As in a nation so in an organisation, the larger loyalty must transcend sectional loyalties. There can be no divided loyalty specially at the time of stress and danger. This is recognised in every country. Whether conservative or liberal or labourite, a Britisher's first loyalty is to the British Constitution and the Parliament that functions under that constitution and through these to the country. Any other way of action for an individual member in a national organisation would be falling away from the ideal. It does not matter how many actually fall away from this ideal in practice. But the ideal must be clearly understood and stated. For if that is not done human frailty and shortsightedness that refuse to see the whole on account of the part are propped up by a wrong theory. Passion, prejudice and confused thinking are nationalised.

The second essential of a party within an organisation is that within it no violent revolutionary methods of change can be employed. All change must come through

recognised constitutional channels. However revolutionary may be the policy advocated, it must be brought about by means constitutionally provided for. The aims, for example, of the Labour party may be revolutionary but as long as it seeks to achieve them through the Parliament and by the constitutional methods recognised by that organisation, it (the Labour Party) is a part of the Parliament in spite of its aims. To-day it talks of nationalisation of certain key industries. Such a change, in a capitalist society, is revolutionary but as the Labour Party seeks to bring about the change by constitutional methods it is a constitutional and not a revolutionary party. The Labour Party can establish full socialism in England but as long as it seeks to do so constitutionally, it is working within the limits imposed by the Parliament. The Bolshevik party in Russia was revolutionary not only in its aims and objects but also in the methods by which change was sought to be brought about. The Trotskyites, in the Bolshevik party, were revolutionary, not so much in their aims and objects, which were nearly the same, but in the methods by which they wanted to dominate the Bolshevik party. It was therefore eliminated. (How it was eliminated is not a question relevant to our present argument). A group or a party in an organisation that does not want to bring about change by constitutional methods, provided by the organisation, cannot form part of that organisation. Such a group cannot be absorbed in the organisation. Sooner or later it would create fundamental conflicts in loyalty. Every party or group in the Congress, if it aspires to be in the Congress and serve it, must work to capture the organisation in accordance with the rules provided for by the constitution. When a group has so captured the organisation and its machinery it has

the right to change its (the organisation's) constitution again through the channels provided for by the old constitution. Gandhiji at Nagpur got a majority in the Congress to endorse his policies and programme. He afterwards introduced a new constitution in the Congress. The new constitution was passed by the old methods. Every subsequent Congress, thenceforth, was organised in terms of the new constitution.

To conclude, so long as a group in an organisation renders first loyalty to the organisation as a whole and so long as it seeks to bring about change by constitutional methods provided by the organisation, a group, whatever its aims, remains a part of the organisation and must be allowed to function and must not be suppressed. Any suppression of such a group would cut at the root of democracy which provides for free discussion and peaceful and non-violent conversion.

Party or a Platform ?

The other question that has been debated in recent years is whether the Congress is a party or a platform. I must admit that I do not know the exact meaning of the term platform, in this context. The Webster's Dictionary gives the meaning of the word "platform" as a place for public discussion of question and principles—a lecture form—a lyceum. A lyceum means "an educational organisation providing inspirational lectures, concerts, etc". I do not know in what sense the word is used by our socialist friends when they apply it to the Congress. The Indian National Congress undoubtedly is a propagandist and educational organisation. But every dynamic and progressive group or party is that. Is the Congress something more than all this? Is it merely a platform

where it prescribes a creed and a method for the attainment of its goal? Is it again a mere platform when it calls on thousands of people to court jail and undergo sacrifices and sufferings, which may and sometimes do involve the supreme sacrifice of life? Again, is the Congress a mere platform when it takes disciplinary action against those who fail to carry out its programmes and policies? Is the Congress a mere platform when it fights elections to the legislatures, when it opposes and is opposed by the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha and other parties claiming to work for Indian independence? Is the Congress a platform when a party calling itself the liberal party claims to work for almost identical aims but by different methods? Is it a mere platform when it runs Governments?

It is true that the Congress is not a party in the sense that it has narrow party aims. Its aims are universal, in that they embrace the whole of India. But a party may and often does represent the needs and aspirations of a whole country. It does not on that account cease to be a party. It remains a party as long as other groups question its authority and oppose its policies and principles. The Congress, therefore, though it is a platform in the sense that it propagates its ideas and educates the public mind, is also a well-knit and organised party. In fact, it is the most compact and united party in India—party not in a narrow sense as the League or the Mahasabha, but a party whose doors are open to all, irrespective of caste, class or religion. Yet these doors are not so wide open as to allow in its ranks the johujoor, the communalist and, to-day at least, one variety of socialists. The Congress is both a platform and a party. Though inclusive, it is also exclusive. It is as representative of India as would be a landscape

picture. The picture represents the landscape and yet necessarily leaves out many things that are not significant from its purview. The picture is inclusive, yet circumscribed and limited. In spite of its limitations it is significant in terms of a painting. The Congress likewise, though it is inclusive, is also circumscribed and limited. The nation is always greater and larger than the Congress. In that sense, too, the Congress is a party.

Front Populaire ?

Then it is said that the Congress is the front populaire in India. What is this front populaire? After World War I when reactionary forces were rising in power everywhere in Europe and the radical, the leftist and the socialist groups were fighting among themselves, some political thinkers advocated a combination of all democratic and popular parties to oppose political reaction. Such popular fronts came into existence in several European countries and notably in France. A popular front is a confederation of radical groups and parties. The parties therein combine for certain definite and specific purposes. There is no organisational unity. Generally, the heads of different groups meet together and formulate their common opinions on current events and decide upon the general policy that is to be pursued by each group separately and conjointly to meet reactionary forces. The policies decided upon are not binding upon individual members of the groups composing the popular front, unless ratified and adopted by each group or party separately. Popular fronts are thus voluntary alliances between independent organisations for particular specific and limited purposes. Such unions of parties have no unitary constitution. The different groups are not merged in one organisation. They retain their identity and independence.

In a popular front a communist remains a communist, a socialist a socialist and a democrat a democrat. The members of the different groups owe their first allegiance and loyalty to their own party. If they fail to carry out the policies and programmes of the popular front, disciplinary action cannot be taken against them by the popular front organisation. Action can be taken against them only by their own party and through it. A popular front may be said to be an alliance breakable at will. Because popular fronts were such loose confederations of parties and groups and not well-knit and disciplined organisations like political parties, they broke up and dissolved at the first onslaught directed against them by the opposing forces. Sometimes, the fronts failed because of the heterogeneous elements of which they were composed. The radical groups could not combine on any thing definite or concrete. They could combine only in opposing a common enemy. They fought a common war with divergent minds and ends. They had no united constructive programme. They all wanted a better order of things but what that order was to be was a matter of primary dispute among them.

Is the Congress such a popular front? Evidently it is not. It is not, as a matter of history. It was not formed by several parties joining in a common front. The birth of the Congress was anterior to the birth of groups in it. The Congress even to-day is not a confederation of radical parties. Sometimes the temporary groups in the Congress are not even radical. Often groups have been formed round disgruntled elements. They have been formed by those against whom disciplinary action has been taken. Sometimes groups have been formed by those who have failed to secure elective

positions. They have welded themselves together merely for electioneering purposes.

Again, every member of the Congress becomes its member directly and not by virtue of belonging to a group in the Congress. Such being the case, the Congress expects every member to owe his loyalty first and foremost to it. If any member flagrantly fails in this loyalty disciplinary action is taken against him directly and not through the group to which he happens to belong. In the Congress organisation members elected to committees and executives are not elected or selected by virtue of their belonging to this or that group but because they are members of the Congress. They do not stand as candidates for elective offices on the ticket of any particular group. They are elected for their personal work and worth as Congressmen. If groups in the Congress were to differ from the policies laid down in its resolutions with regard to important and fundamental policies, the Congress would not dissolve as a popular front would under similar circumstances. The Congress is something more than the parties in it. It is not exhausted as a popular front is exhausted by the defection of parties. The overwhelming majority of Congressmen belong to no group or party whatsoever, but are merely Congressmen.

V

DANGER OF DIVIDED LOYALTY

The Congress is a popular front only in this that it embodies the general political will to freedom of all classes and communities in India. But as the Congress is not the parliament of a free country, it is a party of all those who, more or less, actively participate in the freedom fight. The freedom fight requires as much discipline as an international war. Therefore all such groups that differ from the Congress in its fundamental policies and programmes are not allowed to remain in the Congress, that is, the members of such groups are not allowed to hold elective and executive office in the organisation. An avowed Muslim Leaguer or an avowed Mahasabhaite cannot be elected to an elective post in the Congress. Recently the Communist Party has shared the same fate. Also the Congress has never accorded statutory recognition to any party. How could it? Some parties have flouted the will of the Congress when they have thought the Congress policies went against their party interests. The Forward Bloc did not hesitate to set up a parallel Congress committee because disciplinary action was taken against its head and leader. Other parties may not have flouted the will of the central organisation so flagrantly. But the danger of divided loyalties is always there.

Even if the Communist Party had chosen to style itself as the Congress-Communist party and if it had made membership of the Congress compulsory for its party members, it would have behaved exactly in the way it did

in 1942. The name and the proviso of Congress membership would have made not the slightest difference. Some of the members of the Communist party held elective and executive posts. The general public, specially in rural areas, knew these friends only as Congressmen. They often created confusion in the mind of the public by approaching them as Congressmen. In the critical moment of fight they did their best, by the prestige they had acquired as Congressmen, to sabotage the national movement. If other parties fell in line with the Congress, it is because they agreed with the 1942 policy of the Congress. What they would have done if they had differed from the Congress is difficult to say. They would find it difficult to say that themselves. The Forward Bloc had no fundamental differences of policy with the Congress and yet it did not hesitate to create a separate organisation in Bengal which unfortunately still tries to function, even though the imaginary differences it had with the Congress no more exist. The Congress organisation has been very liberal in its attitude towards groups that claim to be within it. This liberality is due to the Congress creed of non-violence.

No revolutionary organisation engaged in a life and death struggle against the holders of power has, throughout history, shown so much toleration. The revolutionary party in England after the execution of Charles the First did not show any tolerance. The Levellers, who were a group among the revolutionaries, were exterminated by fire and sword. In the American independence revolution the extremists or leftists, as they would be called to-day, fared the same fate. The fate of the extreme groups whether of the right or the left among the revolutionaries in France was the same. In our own times the Bolsheviks

liquidated all groups that differed from the party policy quickly and effectively. Revolutionary parties when they take extreme measures against groups and individuals who differ from them are not necessarily cruel and sadistic. Nor must they be supposed to be abnormally deficient in love and loyalty. They show these qualities to a remarkable degree inside the orthodox group. They are driven to drastic and quick action by the logic of a violent revolution. An organised and well-established democratic government can afford to give free play to parties and groups. If such parties resort to violent revolutionary action they can be dealt with by the law of the land. The legal machinery moves slow but an established government that has for long secured the loyalty of the mass of the people can afford to wait. But not so a revolutionary party that by violent action has just secured power and control of the state machinery. Such a party lives in constant unstable equilibrium. If it does not eliminate revolutionary opposition quickly it will be itself swept away. That is, the revolution for which it is responsible will perish before it has established a new order. The situation is as in war, 'Kill or be killed'. The Bolsheviks acted with cruel promptitude against groups in their party. The Fascists and the Nazis acted in the same way against their opponents, whether of the left or the right.

Contrast this with the policy followed in England. There was a Fascist party in England. It was revolutionary and violent. But it was dealt with by the law of the land. How was this possible? It was possible because the British Parliament is not itself a revolutionary but a constitutional body organised into a government for centuries. It has evolved regular and constitutional channels through which drastic changes can be effected.

It has established conventions. It has created loyalties. It has created vast vested interests. It could therefore afford to put in motion the tardy and cumbrous mechanism of the law of the land. A revolutionary party that has recently captured power by violence has not all these advantages and therefore it is obliged to eliminate opposition and heterodoxy by the very methods that it has employed in the capture of power, that is, by violence and terror. It is, therefore, said that a revolution has the habit of devouring its own children.

Discipline and Revolutionary Organisation

Now the Congress is undoubtedly a revolutionary organisation. It wants to capture power from foreign hands and establish a free government in India. For this it has evolved a method of direct action. Direct action is revolutionary. It is not provided for in the constitution. In India, however, this question does not arise because India has no democratic constitution which can be moved by the will of the people through channels provided by the constitution. The direct revolutionary action of the Congress is, however, non-violent. This makes it impossible for the Congress to employ violent methods for eliminating opposition of groups whether of the right or of the left. It can only disaffiliate groups and refuse to keep individuals in its fold. So far as groups are concerned, the Congress is more or less powerless if a show of conformity is kept up. Moreover, the democratic character of the Congress precludes it from any drastic elimination of such groups that are not in conformity with its fundamental principles and policies or render mere lip service. Yet if it allows free scope to groups that directly or indirectly go against its

policies and principles, it will be swept away before it has achieved the freedom of India. What is it then to do? The only course left to it is to create public opinion and exercise moral influence and occasionally specifically to disaffiliate a group. Groups and parties in the Congress, if they are patriotic and wish well to the national movement and even to socialism after liberty is attained, must recognise the limitations imposed upon the Congress by virtue of its not being a parliament of a free country with legal machinery to put down opposition and revolt, and also being a democratic and non-violent organisation. They must recognise that so far as the independence movement is concerned, that is, so far as the fight with a foreign nation is concerned, there must be no difference about the major policies through which the fight is to be carried on. Also there must be little difference with regard to such policies as powerfully affect the fight for freedom. Groups in the Congress must also understand that the first loyalty of their members must be to the Congress, as long as they have not resigned its membership, and not to any particular group or section therein.

For free discussions and conversion, groups and parties are natural. But such groups must be formed on particular issues and not on the issue of fight for freedom or the methods to be employed to carry on that fight. As soon as a particular issue is decided upon the parties must line up and preferably dissolve. For instance, the Independence League dissolved as soon as the particular issue was decided. The Forward Bloc revolted against the Congress while calling itself an integral part of the organisation. This was wrong. It is more wrong for it to keep its identity intact when the particular issue on

which it chose to differ from the general policy of the Congress no more exists. Socialist party has few differences with the Congress. It has given a reorientation to its economic programme. It has reconsidered socialism. It has also reconsidered Gandhism. There is in theory no difference. The party is also pledged to peaceful methods so far as the fight for independence is concerned. The only difference to-day seems to be on the interpretation of non-violence. The Working Committee at Calcutta, last December, laid down the limits beyond which non-violence could not go. These limits are not perhaps acceptable to some in the socialist group. Anyway, as I said above, the groups in the Congress must be temporary and flexible. On the issue of independence they must all line up, as do the different parties in the legislatures of free countries, at critical times or when national existence is threatened. The first and foremost loyalty of the individual members of groups is not to the group but to the parent organisation and through it to the nation. There is ample and healthy scope for groups in the Congress if they adopt the restraints that I have indicated. The Congress, however democratic and however non-violent, must refuse to recognise groups that do not observe these restraints.

I have talked of the freedom fight and said there should be no parties so far as this fight is concerned. This is absolutely necessary for the success of the fight. Taking the example of 1942, if a party or group in the Congress had in an organised way stood against the 1942 movement or denounced it, a difficult situation would have been made more difficult. Supposing again, a group in the Congress had advocated methods that were opposed by another group or the Congress as a whole, no effective work would

have been possible. Each group would have denounced the other and alleged that the other stood in its way of effective work. Something like this actually happened during the course of the 1942 struggle. The non-socialist Congressmen and the socialist groups worked in the beginning together. There were certain forms of opposition to the Government, right or wrong is not the question under discussion, on which they were all agreed. Things ran smoothly. After some time there was division. Certain forms advocated by the Socialists were not acceptable to orthodox Congressmen. The result was mutual recrimination. Those were abnormal times. People's tempers were frayed. They were living under high tension. There is no reason why the differences of those days should yet colour our respective outlook. It is time that all groups lined up. The Congress has made its position clear. It does not hold itself responsible for whatever violence took place. It was of the nature of reflex-group-action under the extraordinary stress created by the terrorist methods the Government employed to put down a spontaneous movement. The leaders while not endorsing all acts done by individuals or groups have congratulated the nation on the courage and bravery it showed and the sacrifices it made. This should silence recrimination and all Congressmen, to whatever groups they may belong, must line up for the strenuous and difficult tasks ahead. If this is not done, it will not be the people, who have shown unmistakable proofs of their courage and their capacity to sacrifice and suffer, and who in the elections have shown their love and loyalty to the organisation they have nourished with their life blood, but the leadership that will be found wanting. The leadership, if it cannot unite and give a powerful and correct lead, will be betraying the country in its hour of greatest need and danger. The

greatest danger often is not when a patient is suffering from a disease but when he has successfully resisted it and is convalescing. The Congress may succeed in the near future to capture power because of its inherent strength and a combination of international circumstances ; but it will fail to deliver the goods in terms of a new order, after freedom is achieved. We will soon fall into warring groups and the common good will be forgotten in petty sectional squabbles.

United Leadership

The freedom fight, as it needs one clear policy, also needs a unified leadership. This leadership need not be of an individual, however high placed. It should be corporate. Recently there has been a controversy among some Congressmen about the slogan 'One Leader'. It is a fruitless and meaningless controversy. There can be by the nature of things no one leader in a democracy. Democracy is always ruled by an executive or a cabinet. The head of the cabinet, the prime-minister or the president, may have more power or less but he is nowhere the sole dictator. Even when he nominally selects his own colleagues, as the English prime-minister does, he is merely the first among equals. He is no dictator. Ever since the Congress had an effective constitution the leadership of the Congress has been with the Working Committee, its Executive Body. In the beginning, the members of the Working Committee were elected by the All India Congress Committee; but soon it was felt that for effective work and responsibility unity of the cabinet was essential. As in England this unity was achieved by authorising the popularly elected president to choose his own colleagues in the cabinet from among the members of the A. I. C. C. This practice is still followed.

It ensures unity of policy and united responsibility. The Working Committee is thus the democratically formed executive of the Congress. If by the phrase 'One Leader' is meant 'One Leadership' and that of the Working Committee, the constitutionally constituted executive, the proposition instead of being a mere slogan becomes politically rational and scientific.

That at one time there should be one leadership and that of the executive of a democratic organisation is too obvious a proposition to need discussion. No organisation or Government can function unless there is unity of purpose and command. If there is no unity of command from whom would subordinate organisations and officers take their orders and to whom will they be responsible? Whatever be the number of departments in an organisation, however they may be kept apart from each other for practical reasons of efficiency or for safeguarding the liberties of the individual, somewhere there must reside the unity and the will of the whole. There may be a great deal of autonomy. Each department may normally work independently of the other but there must be sufficient power in some organ of the state which can resolve all doubt and conflict. There must be a centre of paramount authority somewhere. In a democratic state this supreme organ is the executive or the cabinet. The Working Committee of the Congress is such an executive or cabinet.

There may be in the country a more radical leadership than that of the Working Committee. But as long as the new leadership is unable to convert the country, whether by the policies it advocates or by field work and the personality and popularity of its members, it should, in critical times of national danger, try to influence, the

Working Committee and not set up rival leadership. The conversion of the country by different groups and parties should not be a continuous unbroken process. Political wisdom requires that the opposition should not merely oppose or try to convert. It should give time to the leaders, whom the people have freely chosen, to work out their policies. The rival group or groups must exercise this restraint even in their own interest. When they themselves are installed in power by popular vote they will also require time to put their policies in effect. If rival parties merely indulge in the game of converting minorities into majorities, no policies will have any chance of being successfully worked. Under an established government this game of non-stop conversion, though bad, may not prove disastrous. But when a foreign enemy is to be fought, such an effort at quick conversion would spell disaster. It would mean changing horses in midstream.

Another fact which we may also not forget is that it is not merely policies and programmes but also personalities that attract and influence the common people. Sometimes the sentimental, the dramatic or the religious has a greater appeal for the masses than the factual. The aristocratic legends about a Jawaharlal or the fact of Gandhi's asceticism may appeal to the masses more than sound economic and political policies advocated by less romantic and less ascetic personalities. Democracy cannot afford to quarrel with the people. It must act in the belief, how often so ever falsified, that the people are invariably right. At least their heart is in the proper place and their instincts are on the whole correct. Often their judgement is more sound than that of the bureaucrat, the expert or the specialist. They may not

have all the facts but they judge by some basic principles; and generally principles are a better guide than complex, confusing and contradictory facts. The common people are usually conservative. They do not change ideals and idols easily. The old gods, by the mere worship that they receive from day to day, acquire a very potent psychological influence over the popular mind. The gods may be of clay or mud. That makes little difference. Their influence for the time being is paramount. Wise leadership, the one that commands or the one that seeks to dethrone the old gods, must take note of popular psychology and regulate political conduct accordingly. After all a democrat must recognise the fact that the common people are the masters. If they are influenced by legends that have little foundation in the so-called objective facts and if they are moved by conservative allegiance to old gods and by superstitions that are neither economic nor scientific, we may not quarrel with them. Whatever the handicaps of the people they have the right to select their own leaders. And when they have selected them it is better, at critical times, to influence these leaders from within than to keep up an intransigent opposition and hamper action. So far as the main issue is concerned, if the old leadership is tolerably efficient, it must be allowed to function. Influence to give a direction to its policy may be exercised by other methods than public denunciation and agitation that try to sow seeds of distrust among the people. The people generally work by faith. If one faith is destroyed it takes time to install another in its place. At critical times the nation cannot afford to leave an empty space or a gap. Action has to be continuous. There can therefore be no interregnum. Any void will afford an advantage to the enemy.

In this we may as well learn a lesson from England. The English seem to have a genius for right political action, at least at critical times. During the critical period of the last war they had to change leadership. The people by their pressure changed it. They changed it because Chamberlain's Government had altogether failed in the matter of national defence. This however did not mean that the common people had lost faith in the ruling classes of England. If the radicals or Labour had insisted on an election then, the probability is that the Conservatives would have got the vote. But wisely no party called for an election then. Labour was satisfied merely with the change of personnel. The change meant a reshuffling of the old leadership. An efficient conservative imperialist replaced an inefficient one. In many respects it was known that Churchill was a greater reactionary than Chamberlain. But because he was sure to be more efficient, so far as the immediate objective of resistance to Germany was concerned, his leadership was accepted not only by the Conservatives but also by the radical parties in England. Labour during Churchill's time had to swallow many a bitter pill; they had to suffer constant humiliation; they had to bear Churchill's superciliousness and snobbery. But Labour leadership was patriotic enough to bear all insults in patience and work with Churchill till foreign danger was no more. When that danger disappeared Labour and the disillusioned people threw off Churchill as a rotten egg. No past services could deflect the substantially sound instinct of the common man in England. As he had saved England from the clutches of the effete and the inefficient Chamberlain, so this time when the war was almost won, he saved England from a reactionary

leadership for the task of social security and external peace. As long as the danger from the foreigner was there English democracy and the British Labour Party lay low. But once the danger was gone they asserted themselves, and pushed out reactionary and imperial Churchill. If however in their over-zeal the Labour Party had refused to support reactionary Churchill, to-day there would have been no Labour Party in power in England. Perhaps there may have been no free England to be ruled over by Labour. In premature action the Labour Party would have exhausted itself and jeopardised its own future and probably that of their country. A radical party, as any growing organisation, has to conserve its energy and not to exhaust itself in premature action.

In India the old guard under Gandhiji's leadership has not ceased to oppose foreign imperialism. The people have yet a good deal of faith left in their old gods. They (the people) may if their passions are aroused throw off the old gods. But before they install the new ones there is bound to be a gap of time when the country would be without effective guidance. This at critical times when the enemy is on the native soil would not be a desirable or helpful thing. It was possible for Shri Subhas Chandra Bose to throw off the old guard and install himself on the presidential gadi. He had the whole Congress organisation at his disposal. Yet he wanted the support of the old guard. He wanted the blessings of the Old Man and the co-operation of Jawaharlal Nehru, Moulana Azad, Vallabhbhai, Rajendra Prasad, Sarojini and others. Some of the radicals who had helped Subhas Bose to re-ascend his eminence would not join his cabinet. They knew that the people had not yet ceased to worship the old idols, even though, in radical eyes, these were made of clay and were not so very radical.

Danger of Divided Loyalty

Supposing, however, that the old guard, consisting as it does of Gandhiji, Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai and others, is really as reactionary as Churchill, let the radicals join them and work with them and help in the overthrow of British Imperialism. Once that is done the reactionary leadership of a Gandhi, Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai can be discarded, even as Churchill's leadership was discarded by England. But merely to try to take away the faith of the people without substituting another, is not the way of political wisdom. A better way for any radical group or party, in or outside the Congress, that wants to supplant the old guard and substitute alternate leadership, would be to go and work in the country, cultivate the good will and affection of the people and have the necessary mass appeal. The people must believe the new leaders to be good, wise and effective. All this would require patience and perseverance. This line of approach, on the part of those who advocate radical policies in action, is much better than mere criticism and denunciation. The essence of radicalism after all is effective action rather than loud talk and denunciation or even more advanced thought and ideology.

There is yet another way for supplanting old leadership and this is by their own consent and through apprenticeship under them. Apprenticeship means hard service and reverent appreciation. A radical may, while keeping his own views and ideologies, recognise the merits of the old leaders and seek to profit by their prestige, knowledge and experience in the conduct of public affairs. By slow degrees the good apprentice may become the master-craftsman and step in his predecessor's place. When he has reached a responsible position he can, by independent action, give a radical turn to national policies. When Jawaharlal joined politics he was more radical than the

old leaders. But he worked under them for long years. During that time he not only faithfully followed them but silently tried to influence them in favour of radical policies and programme. When, however, he acquired sufficient prestige and was a leader in his own right he influenced the policies of the Congress still further. Several of the respected and vocal leaders in the Working Committee passed many years in silent apprenticeship under Gandhi. To-day they are not leaders because they are Gandhiji's followers but in their own right. Often now they do not hesitate to take independent action which sometimes is even contrary to Gandhiji's advice and wishes, and the country follows them. But this kind of apprenticeship is possible only when there is belief in the bonafides of the old leaders and there is genuine regard, if not respect for them. If there is distrust and suspicion and an idea that the old leaders are betraying the best interests of the country then there can be no respect, love or loyalty, which are the necessary conditions for any fruitful apprenticeship. If the radicals therefore want to supplant the old leaders who in their estimate have become either inefficient or reactionary they must either capture the heart and imagination of the people by solid day to day work among the masses or by the slow and laborious process of apprenticeship, step into the shoes of their predecessors. Both these processes however require patient, hard and disciplined work and, above all, restraint and self-control. There is no royal road to leadership unless one is born a political genius. For genius there are no laws. It may dispense with elaborate preparatory education and apprenticeship.

We therefore hold that unless a new leadership comes to the front, by the processes we have briefly

indicated here, the leadership in the Congress must remain with the Working Committee as it has ever been. Even Gandhiji has always sought to work through it. Often he regulates his radicalism and his reforming zeal to suit its convenience. He gives it time to adjust itself to his novel ideas. Gandhiji has always been tolerant of the old leadership. He never hustles it into action. He patiently woos its members. He never denounces them. He is not jealous of their reputation in the country. Those who have seen Gandhiji working in the twenties will bear out the fact that he always held old leaders like Raghavacharya, Motilal, Das, Lajpatrai, Malviyaji in great respect. He loved them as blood brothers. He was junior to them. But he was a radical and a revolutionary. He wanted to push ahead of them. But often if he could not carry them with himself he regulated his quick and light pace to suit their slow-moving and heavy footsteps. Even when they insisted on a policy in direct opposition to him, he allowed them to carry it through and learn by bitter experience. In 1924 when he came out of jail he quietly silenced the no-change and the pro-change controversy that raged around council entry by effacing himself and allowing Motilal and Das to mould the policy of the Congress according to their light. The country was with Gandhiji. Yet he retired and engaged himself in constructive work. Even then whenever his advice was sought it was readily given. He befriended the old leaders in the policies of their own choice. The vote was with him but he would not divide the country. He would not shake the faith of the people in their leaders. Rather he would rebuke all those who tried to belittle their work, their worth and their patriotism. He would always in private and in public praise them. He would show them the

utmost courtesy and even deference. They too in their turn tolerated his idiosyncracies and tried to understand and appreciate his novel and revolutionary ideas and go with him as far as they could. To-day though the Working Committee consists entirely of his juniors, some of whom have grown to their present heights under his leadership and guidance, he shows to the committee's opinions the utmost deference. He waits in patience for his juniors, as he waited for his seniors, to come up to his clear perception of principles and policies. If they cannot, he does not denounce and curse them but allows them every opportunity to learn by experience. He advises the public to look to them for guidance and not to himself. They, in their turn, try to understand and appreciate his many fads, including the latest one of the unnatural Nature Cure. This mutual help, understanding and tolerance has kept the country together in all these difficult years. If these traditions are kept up and followed, any radical leadership need have no fear. It will make itself felt throughout the country in due time.

To conclude then the leadership should be with the Working Committee. The Working Committee must represent the idealism, the wisdom, the strength and the capacity of the nation to suffer and sacrifice. It must also have the capacity to give command and act in difficult situations. In an executive it is natural that all its members may not possess all these qualities. But they must be able to supplement and complement each other. They must form one single organic whole. There must be mutual trust and complete understanding among the members. They must on no account act as individuals, whatever their position in the country. This is the way of political wisdom. Divided counsels make for weak-

leadership, inefficiency and indiscipline. All the differences between individual members must be thrashed and squared out in the inner councils. The nation and the enemy and the outside world must see only one mind and one will determine to see the freedom fight to a successful issue. There should be no vacillation, no wavering in the councils of those in whose hands are placed the destinies of a whole nation.

If all this is done the Congress will march on as a mighty and irresistible force sweeping away all hindrances and obstacles and reach triumphantly to its goal. When on such stable foundations the nation builds its new edifice of a free and prosperous India, where fear and want shall no more mar the lives of millions, the edifice will be solid, serviceable and enduring.

BANDEMATARAM

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गांधी अध्ययन केन्द्र, जयपुर

पुस्तक रजिस्टर
संख्या

विषयानुक्रम
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